DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 215 586 FL 012 932

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TITLE Beyond Rassias: Intensive Language Programs at Large and Small Institutions. Intensive and Super German at Earlham College.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the meeting of the Modern Language Association (New York, NY, December 26-30, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Second Language Programs; Higher Education; Immersion Programs; *Intensive Language Courses; Language Proficiency; Modern Language Curriculum; *Program Design; *Second Language Instruction; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Dartmouth Rassias Method

ABSTRACT

Two approaches to college second language instruction are described. One, an on-campus option, gives students a classroom opportunity that is similar to the intensive/immersion program, which is a ten-week intensive language course followed by a ten-week program in Mexico, France, or Germany. The on-campus option, called "Super," is a two-credit course which assumes three contact hours a day and considerable homework. "Intensive," the first part of the intensive/immersion option, is a one-credit course assuming three contact hours per day and no homework. The approach, method, and pedagogical theory behind both courses was inspired by the Dartmouth Model or the Rassias Method, a process in which students encounter and re-encounter the structure of the language aiming toward fluency. The Intensive and Super Courses go beyond this model in that the courses are taken in a supportive environment with emphasis on the sending and receiving of messages. The method has been favorably received among students and faculty with the result that each year there is a stable number of majors. By way of conclusion, suggestions are given to other teachers and institutions regarding the need to work harder in such a program, to train student instructors, to promise and deliver communication skill, and to be eclectic in methodology. (AMH)

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Beyond Rassias: Intensive Language Programs at Large and Small Institutions. Intensive And Super German at Earlham College

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Beyond Rassias: Intensive Language Programs at Large and Small Institutions. Intensive and Super German at Earlham College.

Throughout the 1960's Earlham's Language Department enjoyed a generally favorable situation: a language requirement, foreign study options and basic collegial support. Yet a realistic assessment in the early 70's raised the concern that few of our students were achieving anyone's definition of fluency after completing Earlham's beginning series. To address this problem our Spanish Department introduced in 1972 Earlham's first ten-week Immersion Term in Mexico. The goals were very simple: to enable students to handle the spoken language in as short a time as possible, and to provide the students with a first-hand cultural experience. This twenty-week package delivered on the promise of rapid acquisition of language as communication skill and meaningful application of new language skills -- an in-country experience.

An initial impetus for our program derived from the Dartmouth model -- from the simple idea of using student teachers in classes to reinforce and expand work done in a master class. The Rassias model certainly inspired Earlham's early efforts, but we soon moved in very different directions. Later on I will describe these directions in more detail.

Our Intensive/Immersion model in Spanish was well received, and French and German soon developed similar programs. By the mid 70's the foreign sites for Part II of our Intensive/Immersion programs were Cuernavaca, Mexico; Rodez, France and Marburg, Germany. Each language ran one such program each year. Groups consisted of 15 to 18 students and the Intensive teacher who accompanied the group as coordinator and teacher in the foreign locale.

Even with this success, however, another need soon became apparent. While we were now providing a structure and a method that led to rapid second-language acquisition, a number of students were unable to leave campus for the Immersion phase. We were ready to provide an on-campus structure that would give students a similar classroom opportunity -- a meaningful and productive experience within the framework of our three credit foreign language requirement. This is the Super format which has proved as successful as the Intensive/Immersion package, and which is regularly offered in French, German and Spanish.

By 1977 each language had adjusted its offerings to include a so-called traditional beginning language sequence annually, a Super format every year or in alternating years, and an Intensive/Immersion format every year or in alternating years.

A. Super is conceived as an on-campus option. This is a two-credit course (Earlham students take a normal load of three courses per term) which assumes three contact hours per day and considerable homework. Work in this course is equivalent to the amount of material covered in the first two courses of our traditional language sequence. When completing this course it is assumed that students will continue their language work on-campus and will at least finish the College language requirement by taking the next course in sequence.

Daily Format for Super German (Note that all further references are solely to German but that French and Spanish are much the same.)

1 o'clock: Group session with faculty instructor and all the students. Introduces new material, covers grammar points, examines Culture, and frequently centers on whole-class activities.

2 or 3 o'clock: Class is divided into two groups taught by student instructors. Part of the period is devoted to language laboratory activities, the other to reinforcement of the material introduced in the master section at 1 o'clock. This may take the form of skits, dialogues and, later in the term, discussion on various topics, as well as songs and oral and written exercises. The goal is social interaction and the application of the language as communication.

9 or 11 o'clock: Class is divided into two groups conducted by student instructors to reinforce the material introduced on the previous day, with drilling being kept at a minimum. The emphasis is on student interaction and mutual help and peer modeling. Material from the textbook is made more personal, relating to the students' own world and experiences.

B. Intensive is conceived as an on-campus start-up which leads to an off-campus Immersion in the language and culture in Germany. This is a one-credit course which assumes three contact hours per day but has no homework expectations. After completion of this course there is no closely coordinated option for students to continue work in German at Earlham's campus, for Intensive enrolls only students who intend to continue to the second phase,

Immersion and further study in Germany.

The whole group -- including the teacher/program leader -- then proceeds to a language institute in Marburg, Germany for the next term's work. This is the "Immersion" phase of our program which entails eight weeks of language study -- four hours a day -- and an additional course in History and Culture. There are group excursions and a week long stay in Munich as well as independent travel. This foreign component earns the students two Earlham credits in the language and one credit in German Culture.

Daily format for Intensive German

The three hours in this format are very similar to "Super" except for changes in some activities, necessary because we have no homework expectations. In this format we have to be mindful that our lesson plans take into consideration that students will not appear on the next morning with all of the required paradigms, dialogues and vocabulary memorized. However, we do stress communication and interaction and are ultimately successful without homework expectations because we only complete two-thirds of the chapters we master in the same three-hour format used for "Super".

We have described the structure of our courses, the daily format, the term-long time frame. We have also described our goals: sufficient fluency in minimal time, and application of the learned material in a very meaningful context: study and travel abroad. But an intensive program is more than a fast-paced learning structure. An intensive program should have an intensive method, a well thought out approach. The Dartmouth Model has a unique and appropriate method, the Dartmouth Method. I distinguish between format/structure/model and approach/method/pedagogical theory. In the spirit of the topic "Beyond Rassias" I would like to describe our approach, our method, our pedagogical theory as it has evolved away from the original impulses given us by the Dartmouth Model, the Rassias Method.

The Rassias Method can be described as a well considered development in the audio-lingual tradition. It is a method which views the intensive class as a process in which students encounter and re-encounter the structure of the language aiming toward fluency. In contrast, the Earlham intensive class is a process in which students encounter each other using the structure of the language aiming toward fluency. Our Intensive and

Super share the Rassias method's premiste that the foreign language classroom should be lively, enthusiastic, uninhibiting, fast-paced, spontaneous, outrageous and even exhausting for the teacher(See Stanfield and Hornor). We also share the premise that affective learning fixes the material more effectively than rote learning. But our basic assumptions about language learning leads us to a method very different from Rassias'. These assumptions are that:

1. Language exists and evolves as a means of social interaction.
2. Language as a social tool is best learned in real communication situations.

Based on these assumptions we fashion a supportive environment in which the sending and receiving of messages replaces drill work. Even in the earliest course phases we create contexts in which students can shape meaningful utterances on the basis of their individual interests and attitude. Teachers coordinate, facilitate, support, and provide correctives for the use of language rather than try to instill linguistic habits in an ALM sense. We come to encourage and expect peer learning as students join together and learn how to learn. This supportive and cooperative method yields a rewarding classroom experience that is very different from the rest of the student's undergraduate learning experience.

Student attitudes toward Intensive and Super are such that Earlham's foreign languages are now seen as a very positive, very meaningful part of the College's general education requirements. Perhaps twice as many students take courses beyond the beginning series even though the College has perhaps ten percent fewer students enrolled than it did five years ago. We find that the esprit established among Intensive and Super learners motivates them to continue with languages as an avocation even though they may have another academic major, and a much sought after goal for students is to become one of our student instructors regardless of their major. This passion for the power of another tongue has given us a stable number of majors in the face of a national decline of such interest, and we have perhaps three times the number of majors in Languages and other disciplines.

Positive attitudes among our colleagues reflect our own revitalization, and we are no longer the foreign enclave at the outer rim of the liberal arts enterprise. Indeed, our Intensive and Super formats have carried us to a new place in the College curriculum

and we now are very near theeducational center of the liberal arts degree.

Suggestions

Be prepared to work. The material for each of the day's sections must be designed to evolve from the previous one, and activities must be structured and integrated so as to form "a whole." That is, each and every one of them must be for the purpose of introducing, expanding and/or reinforcing what has been done before; there must be a meaningful progression, a meaningful learning set. While there should be plenty of room for flexibility, there should be none for randomness, because one haphazard, ill-conceived class can have damaging effects on the one to follow.

Moreover, the student instructors depend on well-coordinated, diversified material to be covered in their sessions. Since they do not attend the other classes, they must be able to rely on each other to separately carry out the daily objectives as effectively and completely as possible. The master instructor, therefore, must make it his or her most important task to divide the lesson into manageable units and to judiciously plan the daily schedule. Student instructors are not expected to improvise!

Train your student instructors well. Whether you expect your instructors to be drill masters,to guide learners through communicative activities, or to spark spontaneous discussion, they have to be trained for their work. We therefore recommend a paid workshop before classes begin. Ultimately most of your success will hinge on the quality of your student instructors and your ability to coordinate the learning process in three different classrooms with three different but well trained teachers.

Promise communication skill and deliver. For the sake of brevity I will oversimplify and say that the Intensive model should stress communication competence and that linguistic competence -- correct manipulation of structure -- is ultimately best made real as a function of communication. Structure and vocabulary are of course the substance of daily work with the language, but the real agenda is the process, the application of structure and vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

Be eclectic. Whether we proceed with method A or method B, with an audio-lingual habit theory or with a cognitive code-learning theory the instructor must bear in mind that an Intensive model is a unique opportunity to move very rapidly to the goal of oral

competence. Any method, or preferably a combination of many methods, may be employed as long as it includes the possibility for autonomous interaction, as long as it gives the student a substantial and real role in the learning and teaching process. Only by so moving from controlled practice to linguistic autonomy will we give students what they want and need, and Intensive courses will be popular and successful.

Readings pertinent to Earlham's Super and Intensive Languages:

Charles Stanfield and Jeanne Hornor, "The Dartmouth-Rassias Model of Teaching Foreign Languages", ADFL Bulletin, May, 1981

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Wilga M. Rivers, Speaking in Many Tongues. Essays on Foreign Language Teaching, Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1972

Charles Curran, Counseling-Learning in Second Languages. Apple River, Ill.: Apple River Press, 1976

Howard Lamson, "Intensive Language and Cultural Immersion: A Cooperative Method", Foreign Language Annals, December, 1974